judgement of the merits of the case. Concerning the proposed India-US civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed India's stand that both countries needed to work in the spirit of the 18 July, 2005 Joint Statement and in strict conformity with the reciprocal commitments contained therein. The Ambassador expressed his sincere regrets, saying that his remarks had been taken out of context, and that it was not his intention at all to question India's right to take decisions on the basis of its own national interests.

Award of Bhartiya Samman

*84. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there were protests against the award of Bhartiya Samman to certain awardees on the occasion of last Pravasi Bhartiya Meet;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, in respect of one Pravasi Bhartiya Samman awardee.

(b) A few oversea Indians in the audience had protested against conferring of the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award, 2006 on Dr. Sudhir Parikh.

(c) Dr. Sudhir Parikh had been approved for the Award keeping in view his contribution to the Indian-American community, championing US-India relations and philanthropy.

Increase of land rates for institutions

*85. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to raise the land rates for institutions in Delhi; and

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the reasons therefor?